

**Concept of Consumer Policy
for the years 2001-2005**

**Ministry of Industry and Trade
of the Czech Republic**

2000

The Consumer Policy Concept for the Years 2001-2005

General Principles

1. The goals of the Czech Republic's consumer policy are as follows:
 - a. To protect the citizens' lives, health and economic interests
 - b. To contribute to the protection of its internal market from fraud
 - c. To develop activities of non-governmental consumer organizations
 - d. To improve the citizens' awareness of their rights when purchasing goods and services, and of the ways of enforcing their economic interests on the market,
 - e. To contribute toward the achievement of compatibility of CR's domestic market with EU's internal market, by the reference date of CR's accession to the EU, i.e. by January 1, 2003.
 - f. To participate in the generation of confidence in the electronics market and in its further enhancement.
2. In relation to the environment, the country's consumer policy shall pursue the establishment and fulfillment of sustainable consumption patterns, especially by way of:
 - g. Improving the citizens' access to information on products and services (e.g. by means of labeling environment-friendly products, labeling products as perilous for the ozone layer, evaluating products during their entire life-span),
 - h. Increasing the consumers' access to information on the possibilities and impact of their active involvement in the waste recovery system to be launched through legislative amendments in the waste and packaging sphere,
 - i. Legislative and economic inducement concerning material consumption (minimalizing inputs, minimalizing and recycling wastes, replacing non-renewable sources by renewable ones),
 - j. Facilitating desirable consumer behaviour (responsibility of both the producer and importer for a product during its life-span and liquidation phases),
 - k. Introducing environmental systems of management in accordance with ISO 14000 norms,
 - l. Agreements with the entrepreneurial sphere on the voluntary attaining of long-range limits for environmental protection.
3. In relation to international trade, the consumer policy's goal is to rule out the creation of non-tariff trade barriers and eco-dumping.
4. The Czech Republic's consumer policy continues to be based on the recognition and ensuring of the consumers' basic rights to:

- m. Health and safety,
- n. The protection of their economic interests from the misuse of power on the part of the seller,
- o. Indemnification,
- p. Information and education,
- q. Representation.
- r.

5. In relation to the electronics trade, the consumer policy's chief goal is to build up consumer confidence in this sphere as an indispensable prerequisite for the development of this key means for "a new economy".

Responsibility for Consumer Policy Coordination

6. The Ministry of Trade and Industry shall continue to coordinate matters concerning consumer policy also in those spheres of consumer protection that fall fully or partially under the competence of other state administration bodies, notably in the following fields:

- tourism,
- price labeling,
- labeling of wastes, packaging, chemical substances, etc., with information on their environmental effects,
- government supervision over the domestic market,
- relations to the EU.

7. The relevant state administration bodies (Ministry of Health, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of the Environment and Ministry for Local Development) shall provide, in an agreed scope, information necessary for ensuring a common procedure in implementing European legislation and for generating a common approach in the negotiations on the CR's accession to the EU.

8. The Work Group for Consumer Policy, established in compliance with Decree No. 1047 adopted by the government of the Czech Republic on October 6, 1999, represents the common platform for ensuring the coordination role of the Ministry of Trade and Industry, the mutual providing of information among the competent state administration bodies, and the resolving of partial tasks.

9. It is desirable to find ways of involving entrepreneurial groups on a broader scale in the consumer protection system, which would be directed, for example, toward the further enhancement of codes of behavior vis-a-vis the consumer and the development of other self-regulatory activities, the implementation of quality management according to ISO 9000 norms, proper practice procedures, etc.

Legal Provisions in the Interest of Consumer Protection

10. The fundamental means for ensuring the goals of the CR's consumer policy during the period up to 2005 is to implement EU legislation in accordance with the course and conclusions of the negotiations on CR's accession to the EU, as reflected in the Consumer Legislation Concept and the Government's Legislative Plan. The meeting of the requirements of other international organizations and entities (e.g. OECD) and the resolving of CR's internal problems in the sphere of consumer protection shall be conducted in harmony with the above principle.

11. In relation to the preparation of legislation:

a. During the period 2001–2002, bills to the following legislation shall be prepared and submitted to the Czech Parliament:

- Act on Temporarily Shared Property Co-ownership,
- Act on Consumer Credit
- Implementation of Directive 1999/44/EC on products intended for consumers and related guarantees,
- Implementation of Directive 98/27/EC on interventions for the protection of consumer interests.

b. Bills will be elaborated for the amendment of the transposition of those directives that have not been implemented fully (e.g. transposition of Directive 93/13/EHS on inadequate terms of consumer contracts, Directive 85/577/EHS on consumer protection in relation to contracts negotiated outside a commercial site, and Directive 97/7/ES on contracts concerning long-distance sales by Act No. /2000 (Gazette) amending Act No. 40/1964 /Gazette/). In this connection, every effort will be made to accelerate the legislative process.

c. Moreover, depending on the circumstances, work toward implementing new EU legislation will be initiated.

12. Attention will be devoted to implementing the relevant provisions of the EU Directive 2000/31/EC on electronics trade and of those OECD directives that are related to electronics trade.

13. Attention will also be given to measures in the interest of consumer protection in the sphere of building products and projects (e.g. implementation of European Directive No. 89/106/EHS for building products, proposal for a system of quantification and classification of companies in accordance with international norms, elaboration of a proposal for the expansion of guarantees and insurance of buildings).

Consumers

14. Consumers' access to their rights shall be approached by combining the following procedures:

- d. Simplification of legal proceedings in compliance with Section 202, Subsection 2 of Act No. 99/1963 (Gazette), Civic Procedure Code, as later amended, notably in Act No. 30/2000 (Gazette),

- e. Implementation of Directive 98/27/ES on interventions for the protection of consumer interests,
- f. Development of a network of independent centres for consumer counselling and the resolving of consumer-related disputes, organized by civil consumer organizations and local authorities in compliance with the resolution adopted by the Council on May 25, 2000 (2000/C 155/01) on a nationwide network of national bureaus for extra-judicial settlements of consumer disputes.

In all the above spheres, new means and procedures must be developed for the settlement of disputes in the electronics trade sphere, in compliance with EU Directive 2000/31/ES on electronics trade.

15. Inspection organizations will contribute to educating consumers toward learning about their rights and the implementing of these rights on the free market by way of publicizing important results, comprehensive reports, legal analyses, etc. State administrative bodies will not conduct their own publication activities in this area, but rather endorse publication and other initiatives of non-governmental consumer organizations oriented toward the increasing of consumer awareness.

16. In relation to education, questions of consumer rights and awareness, and sustainable development will become incorporated into the curricula of primary and secondary schools within the context of natural science subjects, language and civics courses through examples, exercises, model information, etc. Consumer education will not be organized as an independent subject or by way of expanding the school curricula.

17. The Ministry of Trade and Commerce, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Ministry of the Environment, college and university departments, etc., will propose for this purpose a programme for the preparation of methodological devices for teachers, including ways for financing it, which will form a part of the overall consumer policy budget in compliance with Point 31., ensuring that, in 2005, a comprehensive body of teaching devices for the second level of elementary schools and for secondary schools is available.

Civil Consumer Organizations

18. The main political goals concerning collaboration with consumer organizations are as follows:

- strengthening their influence,
- expanding their membership.

The fundamental tools for enforcing these goals will be a government grant policy, specialized assistance and the improving of the legislative base.

19. Cooperation of consumer organizations with state institutions will continue to be coordinated within the context of the activities conducted by the Consumer

Advisory Committee, established under Decree No. 813 adopted by the government of the Czech Republic on December 9, 1998.

20. Consumer organizations shall be conceded the right to initiate interventions for the protection of consumer interests in compliance with Directive 98/27/EC, in accordance with the document of the European Commission and Consumers International, "Questions of Consumer Policy in Central and Eastern Europe". Any terms for state acknowledgement of a consumer organization could be processed, for example, in the form of an amendment to Act No. 634/1992 (Gazette), on Consumer Protection, as later amended, in implementing the above directive.

21. Public funding shall be granted for specific, selected, publicly beneficial activities of consumer organizations, such as consumer product testing, extra-judicial settlements of consumer disputes, the utilizing of the Internet to inform the consumer public, editorial and publication undertakings, etc. in order to facilitate and accelerate their development in compliance with Act No. 59/2000 (Gazette), on Public Funding, on the condition that from this funding only a part of the necessary costs shall be defrayed.

22. Further aspects concerning the policy on civil consumer organizations shall be dealt with in compliance with the EU document "Questions of Consumer Policy in Central and Eastern Europe", issued on November 17, 1999.

Inspection Organizations and Their Competences

23. Marketing supervision is one of the fundamental mechanisms of consumer policy, and inspection institutions constitute its executive bodies. The outcome of marketing supervision provides basic information concerning the real situation on the consumer market and the efficacy of the government's consumer policy. It remains a problem that a substantial part of marketing supervision financed from governmental funds is not coordinated by the individual ministries and that a major part of the results achieved through these activities is not available to other state administration bodies. This situation must be overcome as soon as possible.

24. A basic prerequisite for approximating the marketing supervision systems in the Czech Republic and the EU is to elaborate, on a regular basis, a detailed survey of inspection activities on the internal market and of their cost. This survey must provide sufficient data for the assessment of the structure, appropriateness, efficiency and effectiveness of the individual activities of all the marketing supervision institutions funded from the state budget.

The Work Group for Consumer Policy shall process the requirements and the deadline for the elaboration of this survey by the following dates:

Deadline:	January 31, 2001
Survey:	May 31, 2001

25. On the basis of such a survey, goals, priorities and deadlines will be determined for legislative, organizational, methodological and technical modifications aimed at achieving complete compatibility with the EU, including the relevant financial requirements. Every possibility for cooperation with the EU shall be utilized to establish objective goals in this area. At the same time, the CR's other political goals, such as the reforming of public administration, must also be taken into account.

All requirements concerning investments, structural modifications and additional funding for the activities of the inspection institutions shall be expected to be based on this analysis.

International Contacts

26. In relation to international consumer institutions, of which the Czech Republic is a member state, i.e. the OECD Consumer Committee and the Consumer Policy Committee of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO COPOLCO), such conditions will be created that will ensure the Czech Republic's active involvement in their activities, especially by strengthening the Czech delegation at their meetings held in Europe or its vicinity in order to achieve the level of other comparable candidate states, and by systematically participating in all their meetings including non-European ones.

27. The Czech Republic shall gradually become actively involved in the activities of other international organizations dealing with consumer policy, such as the International Society of Consumer Affairs Officials (ISCAO), International Union of Officers for Consumer Affairs and the International Marketing Supervision Network (IMSN).

28. Czech consumer organizations shall be granted assistance to ensure their full membership in international consumer organizations, such as the European Bureau of Consumer Unions (BEUC), Consumers International (CI), and possibly the European Association for the Co-ordination of Consumer Representation in Standardization (ANEC) and other such entities, and to help them to become incorporated in the European Extra Judicial Network (EEJ-Net).

29. The ministries responsible for the above spheres shall organize and endorse the candidacy of Czech specialists for EU's scientific committees, such as the Scientific Management Committee and the Scientific Committee for Consumer Health Protection and Food Safety.

30. Conditions shall be created for the holding of one or two major international conferences or seminars on consumer protection in the period 2002–2005. With two to three year's advanced notice, suitable dates must be offered to organizations interested (e.g. OECD, TAIEX, ISO COPOLCO, or to one of the organizations mentioned in Point 26.).

Funding

31. The total sum, earmarked by the state budget for the assistance of consumer organizations, college and university activities in the sphere of consumer policy and for other such endeavours, shall be gradually increased to an annual 20 million Cz. crowns, depending on the budgetary situation. Apart from that, a planned sum of approximately two million Cz. crowns will be available in the state budget for the CR's incorporation into the international activities in the consumer protection sphere. The third source for the development of the consumer movement shall be the support of local activities, such as consumer counselling, from the funds of communities and towns.

Preamble

Ad items 1 to 5: General Principles

General principles of the Czech consumer policy have been taken over essentially unchanged from the Concept of Consumer Policy for the Period 1999 – 2000.

Item 2 has been intentionally formulated to meet in full the requirement of the White Paper concerning recognition of consumers' rights within the meaning of the 1975 Action Programme in Support of Consumers. "Compensation" means a broad spectrum of compensations for suffered damage, "representation" means the right of consumer organisations to be considered representatives of consumers.

Ad some general terms employed: "Creating and fulfilling the general formulae of sustainable consumption" is a summary term comprising research, formulation, enforcement and facilitation of procedures and consumers' habits complying with the requirement of sustainable development. "Liability of manufacturers and importers for the product during its lifespan and at the liquidation stage" involves the requirement that, e.g., an importer of motor cars provided with a lead-acid battery is obliged to arrange for defective and old batteries to be collected both during the life-span of the vehicle and upon its liquidation.

Ad items 6 to 9: Responsibility for Consumer Policy

Over the last two years functioning mechanisms have been implemented, necessary for ensuring the co-ordinating role of the Ministry of Industry and Trade in the area of consumer policy and organising co-operation between individual state administration authorities and civic consumer organisations. Utilising them in full is prerequisite for accomplishing the tasks contained herein.

The low participation of Czech businessmen in consumer protection as well as their low awareness of the associated issues is a problem. We must gradually reach a state where businessmen become aware of the fact that consumer protection as well as protection of a healthy market environment are to a considerable extent identical and a reasonable level of consumer protection must lie in the foreground of a respected businessman's interests. Promoting self-regulatory activities, say a codex of behaviour towards the consumer, and procedures applicable to resolving consumer disputes are highly desirable.

Ad items 10 to 13: Legislation in Support of Consumer Protection

Over the last two years longstanding problems have been overcome that previously hindered legislative work in the area of consumer protection, and a consensus of all government agencies as well as of a part of the legal public has been reached concerning the methods and procedures employed to take over European directives. Implementation of European legislation has been considerably speeded up and many terms curtailed. Implementation of all relevant directives is currently in the pipeline.

Two of them are merely in a preparatory stage:

- implementation of the Directive 1999/44/EC concerning products earmarked for the consumer and the accompanying guarantees, expected to be implemented by a forthcoming amendment to the Civil Code;

- implementation of Directive 98/27/EC concerning interventions in support of consumer protection that will affect the Civil Code Regulations, the Administrative Procedure Code and the Consumer Protection Act.

The proposed procedures and tasks constitute a continuation of the consumer-oriented legislation approved by Government Resolution No. 561 of 9 June 1999 and aim at comprehensive adoption of *acquis communautaire* in the consumer protection area as of 1 January 2003.

Ad items 14 to 17: Consumers

Over the last two years we have managed to create conditions for improved attitude of consumers to applicable law. For a long time the low confidence of consumers in enforceability of law has been a serious political problem; the new conditions enable one to overcome it step by step. Implementation of incentives contained in the Green Paper [Com(93)576 final, Brussels 16.11. 1993], "Consumer Attitude to Law and Resolving Consumer Disputes on the Single Market", fostered by the EU, remains a grave problem even in the existing EU member states.

Our solution utilising a network of independent centres established by non-governmental organisations to provide consultation services to consumers and resolve consumer disputes has been recently obliquely confirmed by the Council Decision of 25 May 2000 (2000/C 155/01) on a nationwide network of national centres for out-of-court resolution of disputes. The Czech network comprising currently 28 centres providing free-of-charge consultation services is comparable with those existing in Germany or France. For the sake of comparison let us state that Ireland has a single unpaid consultation centre and Belgium and Austria have none.

The potential to resolve disputes out-of-court is in this system based on an informal authority of the consumer consultation centre, respected by both parties to the dispute. The methodology is based on informing both parties about the legal situation and possible approaches, and aims at an agreement evolving from such information. During its existence the oldest of our consumer consultation centres in Třebíč has resolved more than 5000 of such disputes. A major part of the existing network utilises the experience gained by the Třebíč centre. The network, supported by both the state and the local government, gradually expands, and implementation of Directive 98/27/EC concerning interventions in support of consumers' interests will further supplement the system.

The second series of problems relates to increasing the awareness of consumer public. While the Czech approach to consumer protection continues to accommodate the mentality of the local consumer based on the conception that his/her protection is in the hands of the state and its repressive elements, the European attitude is based on the principle that only an informed consumer who takes care of his/her interest is worth protecting and that the main way how to ensure protection is to provide adequate information together with details concerning its importance. Changing the mentality of adult population is by necessity a slow process. On the other hand, consumer issues are an attractive and lucid topic for both students and teachers. The proposed concept therefore reckons with creating a methodical base for incorporation of consumer issues in the curricula of mathematics, natural sciences, languages and civics.

The existing approach consisting of informing adult consumers will continue with state support extended to independent consumer journalism and co-operation between the

supervising institutions and the media. Traditional is the high esteem gained by the Czech Republic in this area.

Ad items 18 to 22: Civic Consumer Organisations

The number of members of civic consumer organisation has been growing recently, from 300 to 600. In addition to traditionally successful journalism the aforementioned free-of-charge consulting activities have experienced a rapid growth. Consumer organisations have managed to overcome existing conflicts and have commenced the first joint activities. The Czech Republic as the first among the candidate countries has established a Consumer Consultation Committee as an official platform for a dialogue between the consumer organisations and the government. The membership is still substantially narrower than in the other candidate countries, though, and it would be highly desirable to expand it by a factor of at least ten. On the other hand Czech organisations enjoy a high proportion of active members and, accordingly, their results can be compared with the situation in typical EU member states.

The proposed concept is based on the results already achieved and on the EU document "Issues of Consumer Policy in Central and Eastern Europe". Since this text has been prepared jointly with the world consumer union Consumer International, the concept provides for a long-term conformity with the directive dealing with interventions in support of consumers, including the character and size of membership, its duration, objectives and activities.

Ad items 23 to 25: Supervising Organisations and Their Province

Between 1998 and 2000 we have succeeded in eliminating the overlapping powers of individual supervisory bodies; e.g., the experience gained by the Czech Trade Inspection with regard foodstuff safety is in the centre of interest in other candidate countries. On the other hand, this progress has revealed another drawback characteristic of the present state: although individual supervising institutions, according to available criteria, satisfactorily protect the health and safety of consumers, they provide only fragmentary information about their activities. In some instances they even fail to monitor such data, or include them among other supervisory activities and it is then difficult to differentiate between them. Complaints about lack of funds persist in this area; no comprehensive data are however available that would enable one to evaluate the structure and efficiency of expenditures.

Effective and flexible co-operation inside the supervisory system in its entirety is prerequisite for our future incorporation in the RAPEX system. As long as the existing situation persists, where some organisations resolve their problems exclusively within their own (sometimes regional) remit, we shall not be able to inform the EU about occurrence of dangerous products on a timely basis. The legal problems associated with implementation of this system will be resolved by an act dealing with general safety of products; on the other hand, existing technical problems are not so significant.

Assessment of activities of the Czech supervisory authorities by the European institutions is inconsistent and oscillates between general acknowledgement of equality and general criticism. When dealing with the candidate countries the reorganised "Consumer Protection and Health" Directorate considers market supervision its main priority in the coming period and one may thus expect that the Czech Republic will have to face and react to queries and demands. It would be however desirable to raise such

queries and demands as part of a continuing and comprehensive dialogue, where the actual situation in the Czech Republic may be assessed objectively. In view of the persisting lack of funds in the state budget a solution will have to be sought in improved structure and efficiency of supervision.

The first comprehensive materials prepared in 2000 will reflect the situation existing in 1999. The available data are fragmentary and in part refer to an organisational structure and powers already non-existent owing to the provisions of the new Public Health Protection Act and the ensuing, not yet completed changes. It follows from the first experience gained so far that records of the proceeding supervisory activities will have to be improved immediately to ensure that conditions are created in 2001 for acquisition of comprehensive data. Provided we succeed in identifying and resolving the existing problems in 2001, supervision will proceed in the new conditions only in 2002 and the first results will thus be available in 2003. An additional, three-year cycle will be necessary for potential corrections. Substantial progress by the end of 2003 is thus essential, but one must still take into account that a long-term process is involved whose completion would probably exceed the horizon of 2005.

Ad items 26 to 30: International Contacts

As stated in the Submitter's Report, attention should focus on promotion of the Czech consumer policy abroad.

While consumer protection in the Czech Republic is at a level commensurate with that existing in the European Union, our co-operation with foreign countries including the EU has been probably the least developed among the candidate countries bar Cyprus. The Czech delegation attending various events is also usually the weakest (mostly one, at most two delegates). Moreover, during the last five years each of the candidate countries organised at least one conference or seminar, while the Czech Republic none. Also in the OECD we mostly act as mere observers in the area of consumer protection, despite the fact that during the last three years documents have originated there that will influence decisively the consumer policy worldwide, e.g., the OECD Directive on Consumer Protection in Connection with E-commerce and the OECD Directive dealing with supranational corporations.

Personal conditions are gradually created to rectify the situation, but financial conditions are equally important.

Long-term Trends in Consumer Policy

This part of the submitted material summarises the fundamental characteristics of the target state, which the Czech consumer policy should reach sometime between 2005 and 2015. The material does not deal neither with the means and procedures employed to reach the target state nor with the issues of competencies, nor finally with co-ordination of the consumer policy at the governmental and regional levels.

International Aspects

The Czech Republic is a member of the EU and OECD. It is a full and active member of other international organisations involved in consumer policy. In addition to COPOLCO (Consumer Policy Committee of the International Standardisation Organisation) these include ISCAO (International Society of Consumer Affairs Officials) and IMSN (International Marketing Supervision Network).

The Czech Republic is fully involved in EU information networks such as RAPEX and EHLASS as well as in the system for resolving cross-border consumer disputes. Czech experts are members of the Scientific Steering Committee and the Scientific Committee for Consumer Health Protection and Foodstuff Safety. In the field of consumer protection the Czech Republic is engaged also in preparation of potential new candidate countries for accession to the EU.

Czech consumer organisations are full members of CI (Consumers International), ANEC, BEUC, potentially other international unions.

As a result of the above contacts 1 to 2 major international conferences or seminars dealing with consumer protection are held in the Czech Republic each one or two years.

Legislation and Access to Law

Recodification of civil law has been completed; recodification of consumer law is either in progress or has been completed as well. *Acquis communautaire* in the area of consumer protection has been fully implemented and the Czech Republic as a full member participates in the preparation of new European regulations in this area.

Access of consumers to applicable law proceeds through a combination of out-of-court dispute settlement (under the aegis by non-governmental organisations) and summary court proceedings applicable to consumer litigation, where the disputed amount does not exceed a pre-set limit. After the fundamental problems of the Czech judiciary have been resolved issues of law enforcement, excessively long court proceedings, etc. are no longer topical.

Nation-wide solution of consumers' complaints by state authorities in administrative proceedings pursuant to Government Regulation No. 150/1958 Coll., 'On Dealing with Citizens' Complaints, Notices and Incentives' is now obsolete. The number of consumers' complaints has risen (owing in particular to increased self-confidence of consumers) and reaches 100,000 to 200,000 a year. The supervisory and state administration authorities accept and record the complaints but deal only with those that might influence future developments in the area of consumer protection.

Market Supervision

In order to utilise in full progressive methods and, at the same time, maintain the existing allocation of powers, laboratory analyses dealing with foodstuff safety have

been concentrated in two state laboratories, and the centralised sample collection system has been adopted to this scheme.

The intensity of inspection and laboratory activities is similar as in Germany or Austria. Supervisory activities focus on prevention and consultation, repression is infrequent but severe. Considerable attention is devoted to regular training and increasing the qualification of market supervision officials.

Consumer Organisations

Organisations associated in a consumer union have some 100,000 to 200,000 members. The core comprises consumer organisations with 5 thousand to 10 thousand members, the remaining part constitutes, e.g., activists focusing on environmental protection, disabled persons, motorists, and tenants.

In addition to the Consumer Consulting Committee that provides consultation services to the government, several other consulting agencies established by the consumer association are operative and deal with special issues such as, e.g., foodstuff safety, medicines, e-business.

A network of consultation agencies established and operated by consumer organisations comprises some 50 units and each year deals with 20,000 to 30,000 consumer disputes. A consumer-oriented magazine (circulation some 50 thousand) however still depends on state subsidy and co-operation with similar magazines abroad.

Sustainable Consumption

Systems of packaging reclamation, durables recycling and waste collection and recycling operating on commercial basis are mostly in place. The developed systems of labelling environmentally friendly goods, energy efficiency of appliances, etc. considerably influence marketability of goods.

Other environmental issues continue to emerge and their solution requires identical or even higher effort. The problems associated with sustainable consumption are bedevilled by misuse of environmental phraseology to put across commercial and group interests as well by political demagoguery and activities of militant groups.

Consumer Awareness and Education

Increased self-confidence of consumers leads to a more active approach to enforcement of consumer rights.

The general public is informed through non-governmental organisations and commercial media. Consumer issues are taught in primary and secondary schools as part of mathematics, natural sciences, language and civics curricula. At universities, consumer problems form regular topics of seminar and diploma theses.

Business Sector

Self-regulatory activities in areas like distant and direct selling, advertising, packaged travel, e-business, perhaps also in some other areas constitute a fixed part of the existing market protection system. The business community is increasingly interested in, and provides a growing although still limited financial support to, issues like standardisation, testing, quality management, etc. Self-regulatory activities aimed at maintaining market purity are still in their infancy, though.

Costs

Direct investment in consumer protection, i.e., funds needed to finance activities in the field of consumer protection, cross-border contacts, education and support extended to

consumer organisation varies at around 30 to 40 million CZK and exhibits the following structure (data in CZK million):

Support extended to civic consumer organisations	25 – 30
Payroll and operating costs of the Ministry of Industry and Trade (12 to 20 employees)	5 – 8
Official visits abroad	1
International organisations (conferences, member's dues etc.)	0.5
Methodical support of school education, publication	0.5
Sum total	30 – 40

The overall costs of market supervision (less medicines and medicinal products) vary at around 1.2 billion CZK (calculated at constant 2000 prices and wages).

(The above is based on a rough estimate of current expenditures in this area of some 1 billion CZK. As neither the State Veterinary Administration nor the Hygienic Agency of the Ministry of Health report the cost of activities connected with market supervision separately from other supervisory costs, more accurate data are at present not available.)